



# **Branford, Connecticut**

## **Economic Development Commission**

### **Annual Report**

**JULY 1, 2003 – JUNE 30, 2004**

The Economic Development Commission (EDC) continued to meet on the third Wednesday of each month (except August). As in the previous year, attendance and participation at the commission's monthly meetings remained high. Our dedicated commission members include: *Neal Crowley, Bob Dow, Julie Francis, Joe Gordon, Rhoda Loeb, Roberta McColl, Al Mignone (chair) Bill O'Brien, and Doss Venema.* Chamber of Commerce president *John Cushing* also attended regularly and participated in the Commission's discussions.

*Roberta McColl* and *Neal Crowley* again served as recording secretary and liaison to Planning and Zoning, respectively, providing an invaluable service to the Commission's efforts. Regretfully, after eighteen years on the EDC, *Roberta McColl* resigned. The Commission will miss her and is extremely grateful for all of her hard work for so many years

The 2004 annual "State of the Town Breakfast", in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, featured *Ed Deak*, well-known economist and Fairfield University professor, as this year's keynote speaker. Dr. Deak, along with *First Selectman John Opie*, shared their views on the current local economic climate as well as expectations for both the region and the state. The EDC continued its work with the Chamber through its involvement with the Government Relations and the Business Development Committees.

Various **guests attended EDC monthly meetings throughout the year** to provide the Commission with timely information and valuable insight into many projects and programs relevant to the town's economic well-being. The first EDC meeting of the new fiscal year was at the Town's newly constructed Water Pollution Control Plant on Block Island Road, where plant superintendent **Manny Furtado provided EDC members with a tour of the facilities and explained its operation**, particularly as a critical component in the town's infrastructure and as a major feature that helps position the town for continued economic development. Other guests who shared information with the EDC were:

- *Jason Ziegler, Managing Partner from Sovereign Properties Management* and the project manager at Anchor Reef, offered an overview of the project at the former MIF site;
- *Michael Levin and John O'Toole of CL&P* provided information on the utility's role in our local economy;
- *Chris Reardon, Manager of Planning and Evaluation with the Regional Workforce Alliance*, (formerly the Regional Workforce Development Board), briefed the EDC on the programs and services the organization has available to help meet our area's workforce needs;
- *Anthony Cinicola, Branford's new Building Official*, met with the commission to talk about his relationship with the business community.

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Throughout FY 03-04, the Commission received and reviewed a total of **12 demolition application notices** for structures 75 years and older. In previous years EDC members noted a substantial increase in the number of demolition requests. This year, the EDC brought it to the First Selectman's attention that the current demolition application process is often not followed or is even completely ignored by builders and developers, and appears to be too weak in the event a recommendation is made to save a structure. The Commission is appreciative that the First Selectman has directed a review of the demolition approval process.

Through the staff assistance provided by Terry Elton, the EDC has continued to participate in the Town's ongoing effort to secure the State's approval to have the Exit 53 "connector" reconfigured and to explore funding possibilities for the project. He has also assisted with the continued development of the former MIF site and the construction of the new commuter train station on Maple Street.

**Other action** undertaken by the Commission includes:

- *Creating a Town Center Merchants Committee* to assist in the creation and expansion of economic development opportunities in the Town Center; the committee will be chaired by EDC member Julie Francis and will report regularly to the EDC.
- *Nominating Terry Elton as the Town's representative on the Regional Growth Partnership (RGP) board of directors*; Bill O'Brien has served on RGP's board since its inception eight years earlier, and the EDC and the Town are very appreciative of his service during that time.
- *Plans to participate in a regional business survey and visitation project* that will provide a regional economic database for policy making purposes and to strengthen Town Hall's relationship with the larger businesses in town.
- *Supporting Branford's DEP Open Space grant application* for the purchase of 120+ acres in the Saltonstall watershed, to be set aside and preserved as open space.

The Commission also **continued to periodically publish articles** in the *New England Real Estate Journal* promoting the town as a place for businesses to locate and highlighting our quality of life. Special Projects Manager Terry Elton authored the articles and worked with the paper on the timing and placement.

Respectfully submitted,

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Albert E. Mignone, Chairman